

Message Text

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S E C R E T MOSCOW 14142

NODIS

FOR EUR HARTMAN AND SONNENFELDT ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US

SUBJECT: STEPANOV CASE: SOVIET DECISION TO PNG MARSHALL BREMENT

REF: STATE 209293, MOSCOW 13374, STATE 215113

1. ACTING CHIEF OF MFA USA DIVISION KOMPLEKTOV SUMMONED DCM SEPTEMBER 9 TO MAKE FOLLOWING ORAL STATEMENT (COPY OF WHICH KOMPLEKTOV LATER HANDED OVER): "COMPETENT SOVIET AUTHORITIES HAVE INFORMATION THAT COUNSELOR OF THE US EMBASSY IN MOSCOW MARSHALL BREMENT, USING IMPERMISSIBLE METHODS INCOMPATIBLE WITH HIS OFFICIAL DIPLOMATIC STATUS, REPEATEDLY ATTEMPTED TO OBTAIN FROM A NUMBER OF SOVIET CITIZENS INFORMATION OF A POLITICAL AND DEFENSE CHARACTER WHICH WAS A STATE SECRET. BREMENT PRESENTLY HAS DEPARTED THE USSR, IN CONNECTION WITH WHICH THE USSR MFA REQUESTS THAT WASHINGTON BE INFORMED BREMENT'S RETURN TO MOSCOW IS UNDESIRABLE AND THAT HIS USSR ENTRY VISA IS CANCELLED."

2. FOLLOWING TALKING POINTS AUTHORIZED BY STATE 215113, DCM STRESSED THAT HE WAS PERSONALLY THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR WITH MR. BREMENT'S WORK AND COULD STATE WITH ABSOLUTE ASSURANCE THAT BREMENT HAD DONE NOTHING ALONG THE LINES ALLEGED IN THE MINISTRY'S ORAL STATEMENT. SINCE THERE WAS NO BASIS IN FACT FOR THE MFA'S ACTION AGAINST BREMENT, ONE WAS FORCED TO CONCLUDE THAT THIS ACTION AMOUNTED

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TO RETALIATION FOR OUR ACTION AGAINST SMUN COUNSELOR

STEPANOV. THE FACTS IN THE STEPANOV CASE FULLY JUSTIFIED THE DECISION OF THE USG REGARDING HIM. WE COULD NOT ACCEPT RETALIATION AGAINST OUR EMBASSY STAFF IN MOSCOW FOR ACTION TAKEN AGAINST ABUSE OF STATUS BY SOVIET OFFICIALS ACCREDITED TO THE UNITED NATIONS. DCM URGED SOVIET SIDE TO RECONSIDER ITS DECISION AND THUS TO AVOID A SUBSEQUENT CHAIN OF EVENTS WHICH COULD BRING UNFORTUNATE AND UNDESIRABLE DAMAGE TO OUR MUTUAL RELATIONS.

3. KOMPLEKTOV RESPONDED THAT THE QUESTION COULD NOT BE RECONSIDERED, AND HE HAD NOTHING FURTHER TO ADD. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, KOMPLEKTOV INDICATED THAT SUCH MATTERS WERE UNFORTUNATE AND HOPED THAT OUR GENERALLY GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS WOULD CONTINUE (IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT HE MADE NO ATTEMPT TO REFUTE LINKAGE WITH THE STEPANOV PNG). DCM REITERATED SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH HE VIEWED THIS SOVIET DECISION AND SAID THAT IF DECISION COULD NOT BE RECONSIDERED WE WOULD OF COURSE TRANSMIT SOVIET ORAL STATEMENT TO DEPARTMENT.

4. COMMENT: SOVIET ATTEMPT TO RETALIATE FOR ACTION AGAINST STEPANOV BY EXPELLING BREMENT IS OUTRAGEOUS. I AM THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR WITH BREMENT'S ACTIVITIES AND KNOW THAT THEY HAVE BEEN IN NO WAY IMPROPER. IT WOULD SEEM THAT HE WAS PICKED MERELY BECAUSE HIS TITLE OF COUNSELOR COINCIDED WITH STEPANOV'S, AND THAT HE IS OUT OF THE COUNTRY AT THIS TIME, AS WAS STEPANOV WHEN HARTMAN ASKED THAT HE NOT RETURN.

5. AS I HAVE SAID PREVIOUSLY (MOSCOW 13374), I FEEL STRONGLY THAT THE SOVIETS SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO RETALIATE WITH IMPUNITY AGAINST THIS EMBASSY FOR ACTIONS TAKEN IN REGARD TO THE SOVIET MISSION TO THE UN. THE SOVIET ACTION IS MUCH MORE SERIOUS THAN ANY I WOULD HAVE ANTICIPATED, SINCE THEY HAVE PICKED ON A KEY SENIOR OFFICER OF THE EMBASSY, IN FACT OUR THIRD RANKING OFFICER.

5. THE ODDS ARE CONSIDERABLE AGAINST PERSUADING THE SOVIETS TO RETRACT THIS STEP. HOWEVER, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD MAKE AN IMMEDIATE ATTEMPT TO DO WHAT WE CAN TO
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SECURE A REVERSAL, AND IF THIS FAILS, TO TAKE COMPARABLE ACTION AGAINST THE NUMBER THREE OFFICER IN THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, MINISTER-COUNSELOR VASEV.

6. THEREFORE, I RECOMMEND THAT VORONTSOV BE CALLED IN IMMEDIATELY AND TOLD THAT, GIVEN THE FACT THAT THERE ARE NO GROUNDS FOR FINDING BREMENT UNACCEPTABLE, WE WOULD STRONGLY URGE THAT THE UNWISE SOVIET ACTION BE

RECONSIDERED AND WITHDRAWN. IF THIS IS NOT DONE, WE SHALL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO EXPEL, ON RETALIATORY GROUNDS, THE COMPARABLE MEMBER OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. IT SHOULD BE NOTED IN THIS CONNECTION THAT IF RETALIATION SHOULD UNFORTUNATELY BE NECESSARY, WE SHALL BE GUIDED BY THE COMPARABLE POSITION OF OFFICERS IN OUR RESPECTIVE EMBASSIES AND NOT BY CHANCE DIFFERENCES IN DIPLOMATIC TITLE.

7. TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS, SUCH AN APPROACH SHOULD BE MADE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, PREFERABLY NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 9, SO THAT I CAN FOLLOW UP WITH GROMYKO AT SEPTEMBER 10 APPOINTMENT. IN THE MEANTIME, I AM HOLDING THE SOVIET MESSAGE VERY CLOSELY WITHIN THE EMBASSY TO AVOID ANY POSSIBILITY OF PRESS LEAKS.
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